

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Louis J. Hoffman on January 21, 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

In claim 20, in line 13, after "to fit" deleted "loosely".

In claim 20, in line 13, after "of the track" inserted --so that the body can move along the track--.

In claim 20, in line 14, after "parallel to" inserted --the longitudinal slot of--.

In claim 20, in line 16, after "parallel to" inserted --the longitudinal slot of--.

In claim 20, in line 19, after "than the slot" inserted --to enable the body to pass through the slot when the wider axis is parallel to the longitudinal slot--.

Canceled claim 25.

In claim 27, in line 2, after "box-shaped body" inserted -- , one edge at each opposing end of the body--.

In claim 34, in line 17, after "to fit" deleted "loosely".

In claim 34, in line 17, after "of the track" inserted --so that the body can move along the track--.

In claim 34, in line 18, after "parallel to" inserted --the longitudinal slot of--.

In claim 34, in line 20, after “parallel to” inserted --the longitudinal slot of--.

In claim 34, in line 22, after “than the slot” inserted --to enable the body to pass through the slot when the wider axis is parallel to the longitudinal slot--.

Canceled claim 38.

In claim 40, in line 2, after “box-shaped body” inserted -- , one edge at each opposing end of the body--.

2. The following is an examiner’s statement of reasons for allowance:

As to claims 20 and 34, Zakrzewski et al. (US 6,732,991) disclose the claimed system with the exception of wherein an interior portion of the track and a surface of the frictionally engaged body opposite the neck together define a circumscribed passage within the track; wherein a segment of a wire of the string of lights passes through the circumscribed passage and is retained within the track by the body of the lock; and wherein a light of the string is outside the track so that the wire passes through the slot at a location between the segment of wire that passes through the circumscribed passage and the light.

There is no teaching or suggestion, absent the applicants’ own disclosure, for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the system disclosed by Zakrzewski et al. to have the above mentioned elemental features. Furthermore, such modifications would yield unexpected and unpredictable results.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably

accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MICHAEL P. FERGUSON whose telephone number is (571)272-7081. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (6:30am-3:00pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Daniel P. Stodola can be reached on (571)272-7087. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

MPF
01/21/09

/Michael P. Ferguson/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3679